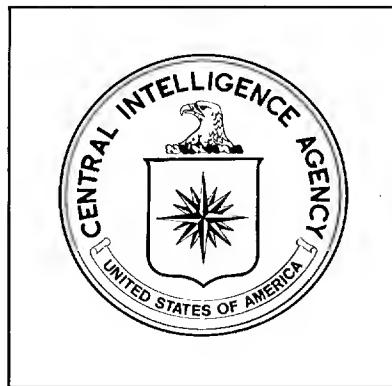


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Fedayeen

*Palestinians Disappointed with
Arafat's Visit to Moscow*

The meager results of Yasir Arafat's recent trip to Moscow have prompted Palestinian leaders to question the extent of Soviet backing for the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Palestinians are particularly concerned over Moscow's attempts to elicit from them some recognition of Israel in return for an invitation to the Geneva talks. They suspect that the Soviets may be working with the US to minimize the Palestinians' role at Geneva as a means of satisfying the demands of Egypt and Syria without forcing the Israelis to boycott the next session of talks.

In the communique issued at the end of his Moscow visit, Arafat in effect acknowledged that the Palestinians would go to Geneva if invited to participate "on an equal footing" with the other parties. This indirect statement of willingness to negotiate with Israel represents--in Palestinian eyes--a significant concession.

Leaders of the PLO feel they can go no further toward announcing a willingness to negotiate or acknowledging Israel's right to exist without alienating their Palestinian and radical Arab backers. Some of Arafat's moderate colleagues are raising questions about the wisdom of going to Geneva under any circumstances, and spokesmen for the "rejection front" have launched a new attack on him for his implied acceptance of the Geneva conference.

Arafat reportedly indicated to the Soviets that the PLO is willing to show some flexibility on the "frame of reference" for its participation at Geneva, but only after the principle of PLO participation is accepted by the other parties. With the prestige he won late last year by his UN appearance now fading, Arafat needs such a victory to bolster his personal stature and to gain more negotiating room.

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Arafat apparently has concluded that until he wins some such concession, he dares not give an inch. [REDACTED]

Arafat, while in the Soviet Union:

-- Reaffirmed that the PLO cannot accept Security Council Resolution 242, which refers to the Palestinians only as a refugee problem, as the basis for the Geneva conference.

-- Vetoed the idea of seeking a new UN resolution affirming the equal right of the Palestinians and Israelis to secure borders.

-- Quashed as premature any discussion of increased Soviet military and economic aid to the PLO, presumably suspecting that such assistance would be tied to unacceptable political concessions.

PLO spokesmen and information media are nevertheless describing Arafat's visit to the USSR as the "most successful ever" in an attempt to minimize the damage to Arafat's reputation and draw attention away from the embarrassing lack of concrete accomplishments. Pro-fedayeen newspapers in Beirut have claimed that the long-delayed opening of the PLO office in Moscow will take place in two weeks, and have alleged that the Soviets promised a variety of unspecified economic, military and political assistance to the Palestinians. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Afghanistan-Iran

Daoud's Visit

Afghan President Daoud scored a major success in obtaining large-scale Iranian economic assistance during his visit to Tehran in late April.

A memorandum of understanding committed Iran to provide a minimum of \$720 million in long-term credits for specific industrial and infrastructure projects to be begun this year. Terms will vary according to the project but a large portion of the aid reportedly will be interest free. Financial assistance for other major projects, including a railway link between the two countries was promised once feasibility studies are completed. Afghan officials with whom US embassy officers have spoken have been effusive in their praise of Iran's generosity, and are newly optimistic about prospects for developing their country's primitive economy.

The visit also appears to have helped ease long-standing Afghan apprehensions about dealing with their large and wealthy neighbor. Afghanistan's dominant ethnic group, the Pushtuns, are orthodox Sunni Muslims, many of whom have recoiled at talk of close ties with Iran's Shias. Recognizing these sensitivities back home, Daoud's public statements in Iran regarding brotherly ties between the two nations were far more restrained than the Shah's.

The two leaders reportedly discussed Kabul's dispute with Islamabad over the status of Pakistan's frontier provinces and the Shah, as in the past, counselled restraint on both sides. There is no indication, however, that the Iranian leader proposed taking any new initiatives to mediate the dispute.

Most politically conscious Afghans probably feel that the Shah's warm treatment of Daoud, combined with their president's dignified performance, while acting essentially as a supplicant, have enhanced Afghanistan's international image. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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